

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A lift assembly adapted to be affixed to a vehicle for movement of a load between raised and lowered positions, said lift assembly comprising:

mounting structure attachable to said vehicle;

carriage structure associated with said mounting structure, said carriage structure movable along said mounting structure between a stowed position and a deployed position;

platform structure having opposite first and second sides and inboard and outboard ends, said platform structure being moveably ~~pivotally~~ coupled to said carriage structure for movement between raised and lowered positions and a stowable position existing in-between said raised and lowered positions;

first and second handrails pivotally coupled to said platform structure, said first and second handrails being movable between an extended position in which said first and second handrails extend upwardly from said platform structure, and a retracted position in which said first and second handrails are arranged along said first and second sides of said platform structure, respectively, wherein movement of at least one handrail to said extended position automatically locks said at least one handrail in said extended position; and

a handrail release lever associated with said platform structure, wherein movement of said handrail release lever unlocks said at least one handrail, thereby allowing said at least one handrail to move from said extended position to said retracted position.

~~a first drive assembly conditionally operated for effecting reciprocal movement of said carriage structure between said stowed and deployed positions; and~~

~~a second drive assembly conditionally operated for effecting reciprocal movement of said platform structure between said raised and lowered positions.~~

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2. Canceled.

3. (Currently amended) The lift assembly of Claim 1, wherein said at least one handrail is locked in said extended position by a lock assembly, said lock assembly comprising:
a latch engagement member associated with said ~~first or second~~ at least one handrail; and
a latch biased into engagement with said latch engagement member when said at least one handrail has attained said extended position, thereby locking said at least one handrail in said extended position.

4. (Currently amended) The lift assembly of Claim 3, ~~further comprising a handrail release lever associated with said platform structure~~, wherein movement of said handrail release lever disengages said latch from said latch engagement member, thereby unlocking said at least one handrail so that said at least one handrail may articulate to said retracted position.

5. (Original) The lift assembly of Claim 4, further including handrail release linkage interconnecting said handrail release lever and said latch.

6. (Original) The lift assembly of Claim 1, wherein said first handrail is linked to said second handrail causing contemporaneous movement therewith.

7. (Currently amended) The lift assembly of Claim 1, wherein ~~both of~~ said first and second handrails are locked in said extended position by lock assemblies, each of said lock assemblies including:

a first link having first and second ends, said first link pivotally connected at ~~at least one~~ at one end of said first end to said platform structure;

a second link having first and second ends, said second link pivotally connected at ~~[[one]]~~ said first end to said ~~other~~ second end of said first link and pivotally connected at the other said second end to said first or second handrail;

a latch pin connected to one of said links; and

a latch plate associated with said platform structure and biased into engaged with said latch pin, thereby locking said first or second handrail in said extended position.

8. (Currently amended) The lift assembly of Claim 1, further comprising a first drive assembly conditionally operated for effecting reciprocal movement of said carriage structure between said stowed and deployed positions, a second drive assembly conditionally operated for effecting reciprocal movement of said platform structure between said raised and lowered positions, and an electronic disabler for disabling the operation of either said first or said second drive assembly based on said position of said first or second handrail ~~handrails~~.

9. (Original) The lift assembly of Claim 1, further comprising an inboard barrier pivotally connected to said lift platform at said inboard end, said inboard barrier being movable between a bridge position, a safety barrier position, and a stowable position in which said platform structure may be moved by said carriage structure between said carriage stowed and carriage deployed positions.

10. (Original) The lift assembly of Claim 9, further comprising a lever linked to said inboard barrier for effecting movement of said inboard barrier between said bridge position and said safety barrier position, said lever being movable between a first position in which said inboard barrier is in said bridge position and a second position in which said inboard barrier is in said safety barrier position, wherein said lever includes a handle portion that may be grasped by an operator to manually manipulate said lever.

11. (Original) The lift assembly of Claim 10, wherein said lever may be locked in said second position, thereby locking said inboard barrier in said safety barrier position.

12. (Original) The lift assembly of Claim 11, wherein said lever includes a projection, said lever being locked by said projection extending into an opening in said platform structure.

13. (Original) The lift assembly of Claim 10, further comprising an electronic disabler for disabling the operation of said second drive assembly based on said position of said lever or said position of said inboard barrier.

14. (Original) The lift assembly of Claim 1, further comprising an outboard barrier pivotally connected to said platform structure at said outboard end, said outboard barrier movable between a ramp position and a safety barrier position.

15. (Original) The lift assembly of Claim 14, further comprising an outboard barrier locking latch associated with one side of said platform structure proximate said outboard end, said latch including an engagement structure, and a latch engagement member associated with said outboard barrier, said latch engagement member positioned and configured to cooperate with said engagement structure for locking said outboard barrier in said safety barrier position.

16. (Original) The lift assembly of Claim 15, wherein said engagement structure is a slot and said latch engagement member is a latch pin.

17. (Original) The lift assembly of Claim 14, further comprising an electronic disabler for disabling the operation of said first or said second drive assembly based on said position of said outboard barrier.

18. (Currently amended) In a wheelchair lift mountable on a vehicle adjacent a vehicle doorway, said wheelchair lift having a lift platform, said lift platform comprising:

a lift deck defining length-wise sides and width-wise ends;

a barrier disposed along one of said widthwise ends, said barrier movable between at least a stowed position and a raised, safety barrier position extending upwardly from said lift deck;

~~a pair of at least one handrail handrails~~ pivotally mounted on one of said sides of said lift deck, said at least one handrail ~~handrails~~ pivotally movable between an extended position in which said at least one handrail extends ~~handrails extend~~ upwardly from said lift deck, and a retracted position in which said at least one handrail extends ~~handrails extend~~ along one of said sides of said lift deck ~~substantially parallel therewith;~~

wherein movement of said at least one handrail from said retracted position to said extended position causes said barrier to move from said stowed position to said safety barrier position.

~~a coupling linking movement of said first and second handrails; and~~

~~at least one locking assembly for locking said handrails in said extended position.~~

19. (Currently amended) In a wheelchair lift mountable on a vehicle adjacent a vehicle doorway, a lift platform comprising:

a lift platform deck ~~surface~~ having an inboard edge and an outboard edge;

~~an inboard~~ at least one wheelchair barrier ~~pivotally~~ connected to said lift platform deck along at least a portion of said inboard or outboard edge, said wheelchair barrier movable between at least a ramp position in which a wheelchair is permitted to enter into or exit from said lift platform, and an upright barrier position in which a wheelchair is not permitted to enter into or exit from said lift platform ~~a lowered ramp position extending outwardly from said lift~~

~~platform surface, and a raised, safety barrier position extending upwardly from said lift platform surface; and~~

wherein said wheelchair barrier includes an energy dissipation device for dissipating energy in the event of a wheelchair collision against said wheelchair barrier when said wheelchair barrier is in said barrier position, said energy dissipation device includes an area of reduced strength oriented along a portion of said wheelchair barrier, wherein said area of reduced strength yields when impacted by a wheelchair.

~~a lever linked to said barrier, said lever effecting movement of said barrier between said ramp and safety barrier positions, wherein said lever includes a handle portion that may be grasped by an operator to manually articulate said barrier.~~

20-39. (Canceled)

40. (New) A lift assembly adapted to be affixed to a vehicle for movement of a load between raised and lowered positions, said lift assembly comprising:

a lift platform having first and second ends;

at least one platform barrier pivotally attached to one end of said lift platform, said platform barrier being moveable between a ramp position in which said barrier extends outwardly from said end of said lift platform and a safety barrier position in which said barrier extends upwardly from said lift platform; and

a foot pedal mechanism that actuates said platform barrier between said ramp position and said safety barrier position.

41. (New) The lift assembly of Claim 40, further including a latch pivotally connected to one side of said lift platform, said latch movable between a locked platform barrier position, wherein said latch mechanically prevents said platform barrier from articulating to said ramp position, and an unlocked platform barrier position, wherein said platform barrier is freely movable between said ramp position and said safety barrier position.

42. (New) The lift assembly of Claim 41, wherein said latch is biased into said locked platform barrier position.

43. (New) The lift assembly of Claim 41, wherein said platform barrier includes a latch engagement member, said latch operable to engage and lock onto said latch engagement member when said platform barrier is in said safety barrier position.

44. (New) The lift assembly of Claim 40, wherein said foot pedal mechanism includes a first pedal associated with said platform barrier and a second pedal associated with said lift platform, wherein force applied against said first foot pedal articulates said platform barrier from said ramp position to said safety barrier position, and wherein force applied against said second foot pedal articulates said platform barrier from said safety barrier position to said ramp position.

45. (New) The lift assembly of Claim 44, further including a latch pivotally connected to one side of said lift platform, said latch movable between a locked platform barrier position, wherein said latch mechanically prevents said platform barrier from articulating to said ramp position, and an unlocked platform barrier position, wherein said platform barrier is freely movable between said ramp position and said safety barrier position.

46. (New) The lift assembly of Claim 45, wherein a portion of said latch defines said second foot pedal.

47. (New) The lift assembly of Claim 45, wherein said platform barrier includes a latch engagement member, said latch operable to engage and lock onto said latch engagement member when said platform barrier is in said safety barrier position.

48. (New) The lift assembly of Claim 47, wherein force applied to said second foot pedal decouples said latch from said latch engagement member.

49. (New) The lift assembly of Claim 47, wherein said platform barrier includes at least one side flange, said flange including said first foot pedal and said latch engagement member.

50. (New) The lift assembly of Claim 40, wherein said platform barrier automatically locks in said safety barrier position when said platform barrier is articulated from said ramp position to said safety barrier position.

51. (New) The lift platform of Claim 18, further comprising a hand lever coupled to said barrier such that movement of said hand lever causes said barrier to move from said safety barrier position to a lowered position extending outwardly from said lift deck that allows a wheelchair to traverse over the widthwise end of the lift deck while said handrails remain in said extended position.

52. (New) The lift platform of Claim 18, wherein movement of said barrier from said stowed position to said safety barrier position is independent of movement of the lift deck.